



Performing Artist Philip Aaberg: Musician, composer

Philip Aaberg was inspired by this quote from Pablo Casals, the great cellist and conductor: "The child must know that he is a miracle, that since the beginning of the world there hasn't been, and until the end of the world there will not be, another child like him."

"Innovators, all ... and this idea has guided my life as a concert pianist, composer, and teacher," writes Aaberg.

After graduating from Harvard, Aaberg says his real work as a composer began after he read *Winter in the Blood* by James Welch, and *Wolf Willow* by Wallace Stegner. "These works said to me, Art can be made about where you grew up ... the Hi-line of Montana!" These writers gave me the courage to use the things that make me who I am.

"The tools I have acquired as a composer are through studies of other music and pure musical analysis. ... What formed my voice was the wind, the distance, the loneliness, the grandeur and the beauty of the high plains."

"As a pianist, I have studied many traditions, from notated European music to American barrelhouse ... There truly is no right or wrong way to play the piano if you make it serve your muse. I've incorporated other folk instrumental techniques and drumming techniques in my piano compositions and playing. These playing techniques were not considered 'pianistic' or idiomatic. I hope they are now."

The panel recognized Aaberg as a strong educator with clear ties to his community, and noted that his work shows great musical evolution. The panel responded to his building of an artistic sensibility, specifically in Montana. In his work and application, the panel saw an ongoing curiosity that they found admirable – he never stops searching for what's next. This translated to his ability to really engage his audience.